



January 17th: Raoul Wallenberg Day

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In 2001 the Government of Canada designated January 17 as Raoul Wallenberg Day. He was also the recipient of the first Honorary Canadian Citizenship and recognized by Yad Vashem (Israel) as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Who was Raoul Wallenberg?

Raoul Wallenberg was a Swedish diplomat who risked his life to save 100,000 Hungarian Jews during WWII. As the war was ending, Wallenberg was arrested by the Soviets on January 17th, 1945 never to be seen again. Following the war's end many of the survivors he saved moved to Canada, where they began a new life.

While Wallenberg's exact fate remains unknown, his actions are an inspiration to our efforts to combat racism, discrimination, and all forms of hate.

The Raoul Wallenberg Day lesson plan demonstrates that even in the darkest of times, light can be found in those who seek to do good.

Raoul Wallenberg Day: Scope and Sequence

Curriculum Expectations

Grade 6: Social Studies A3.7

Hook: Class Discussion - What is empathy?

Lesson:

Show the Slideshow: ([English Version](#)/ [French version](#)) *slideshow was adapted from presentation by Melany Chaiquin and Jaden Lairson of Woodroffe HS*



After going through the PowerPoint, if the following questions have not come up in your discussion so far, ask the following questions:

- What risks did Wallenberg take?
- Why do you think he chose to help even when it was dangerous?
- Would everyone have made the same choice? Why or why not?

Then you can choose from one of the following activities to complete the lesson:

- In groups, in pairs, or on their own, have students define the word "hero". Have them list qualities that a hero would have. Take this up as a class, if you did not do it as a class. Make sure the students have a robust definition of the word.
- Have students write a paragraph on why Raoul Wallenberg should be considered a hero. Have them use examples from the PowerPoint and the discussion it generated.

OR:

- Imagine your friend has never heard of Raoul Wallenberg. Write a short explanation telling who he was, what he did, and why he is important to remember today.

OR

- Give your students the Chronological biography strips (see below) to place in chronological order (choose which statements are appropriate for your class to use.)
- See "wrap-up" activity below the biography strips.



Chronological Biography Strips

“Raoul Wallenberg • 1912 - 2012”

Biography Strips

Raoul Wallenberg was born near Stockholm, Sweden on Aug 4, 1912.

A few months before Raoul's birth, his father died of cancer.

Raoul's grandfather, Gustaf, was a successful international businessman and diplomat and encouraged Raoul to learn languages, study other cultures and travel.

As a young man, Raoul studies business and architecture in the United States.

Upon graduation his grandfather sends him to South Africa and Palestine.

While in Palestine he meets many Jews who have found refuge there from the Nazis.

In Haifa he first learns from a German Jewish refugee of the atrocities being committed by the Nazis in Germany.

In 1936, Raoul returns to Sweden. In 1937 his grandfather dies and he must make his own way in the world.



World War Two breaks out and at first Raoul works for the home guard.

In 1941, he takes a job with a trading company that does business between Sweden and Hungary. The owner of the company is a Jew who is no longer allowed to do business in Hungary.

While in Stockholm Raoul watches the film called the "Pimpernel Smith". The main character of the film saves persecuted Germans fleeing the Nazis. Raoul is influenced and says he would like to do something like that.

In 1944, 800,000 Jews live in Hungary. By that time 60,000 Jews have been killed but they have been spared deportation to death camps.

On March 19, 1944 the Nazis occupy Hungary and take control. The Nazi SS is charged with implementing the "Final Solution" in Hungary.

Between May 15, and July 8, 1944, 437,402 Jews from Hungary are shipped to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This is over half the Jewish population of Hungary.

Adolf Eichmann is the Nazi in charge of the extermination of Hungarian Jews as part of the Nazi's "Final Solution".

The "Final Solution" will murder over 6 million Jews (9 million Jews lived in Europe before the Holocaust). Also murdered are Roma, homosexuals, Soviet Prisoners of War, Polish and Soviet citizens, political prisoners, and people with disabilities.



In the United States, FDR creates a War Refugee Board and attempts to mobilize people who can save Jews.

Raoul is approached and accepts a position as special attaché to the Swedish legation in Budapest (Sweden is neutral in WW2 and still has an embassy in occupied Hungary).

He uses his diplomatic immunity and American funds to save as many Jews as possible from the Nazi Holocaust. He buys food, sets up shelters and pays bribes to help the persecuted Jewish population in Budapest.

Raoul sets up a “humanitarian section” of the Swedish legation and begins to issue a *Schutzpass* to Jews which provides the holder of the pass with temporary Swedish citizenship and therefore immunity from Nazi persecution.

He also employs hundreds of Jews at the legation, thus providing them with the protection of the Swedish state.

As the Nazis get more desperate, Eichmann resorts to all manner of evil to murder Jews, including sending them on death marches to extermination camps.

Raoul and his co-workers venture out to provide food to those on the death marches and to save who they can.



Jews holding protective documents from Sweden and Switzerland are put into ghettos, Raoul arranges for daily food supplies into the ghetto. In spite of Raoul's efforts Hungarian extremists called the Arrow Cross still take people from the ghetto and execute them.

In January 1945 the Soviet Union's Red Army enters Budapest and the Nazi terror ends. Within a period of approximately 192 days, Raoul and his co-workers saved tens of thousands of lives.

Raoul wants to meet with Soviet officers on Jan. 17, 1945 to discuss plans reunite Jewish families, take care of orphaned children, re-establish medical services, and find housing.

Raoul and his driver go to meet Soviet authorities to discuss his plan and they are never heard from again.

In 1957, the Soviet Union presents the Wallenberg family with a death certificate saying he died in Lubyanka Prison on July 17, 1947. The document has never been universally accepted. The final events of Raoul's life after the Soviet occupation are still a mystery.



If you do the chronological biography activity complete the lesson by having students complete an exit card (post-it or journal) answering the following questions:

What are some ways in which Raoul Wallenberg countered antisemitism and acts of hate?
What are some ways in which he portrayed empathy?

1) Additional Resources:

[Raoul Wallenberg Materials](#)

[Thomas Strasser: Video Testimony \(Holocaust Survivor saved by Raoul Wallenberg\)](#)

[Thomas Strasser: Montreal Holocaust Museum](#)